INTRODUCTION

In the book of Joshua we are made to understand how our loving and living God wants us to possess by faith our great spiritual inheritance. When God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, He did so with the purpose of giving them the rich and fertile land of Canaan as their inheritance. Similarly the Lord Jesus Christ, not only forgives us of our sins but also wants us to take our full share of the heavenly inheritance, which is "...an inheritance incorruptable, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven....." (1 Pet 1:4). The apostle Paul refers it to as "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12) and says in Eph. 1:14 that the Holy Spirit is given to us as an earnest of that inheritance.

The land of canaan is a shadow of our spiritual inheritance in Christ. At that time Canaan was a fertile land with plenty of water and abundance of the best fruits. In contrast, in Egypt the children of Israel had to labour hard, and had to remain as slaves. In canaan everything was in abundance. That speaks of the fulness of God which we can enjoy in Christ Jesus according to (Col. 2:9.10). God wants us to possess that fulness by faith. We receive enternal life as a "gift, but our share in the inheritance has to be claimed and appropriated by faith day

by day. Just as a child born in a wealthy family, automatically gets a claim on his portion of the family property, similarly each believer born in to the family of God has a claim on the Heavenly inheritance. But it must be possessed by faith.

Now let us look into some important considerations that are needed to give us maximum benefit from our possessing the heavenly inheritance.

1. SIMPLE FAITH

The story of Rahab, as recorded in Joshua chapter 2, teaches us how we can possess our inheritance by faith. Going by the family and nationality etc., Raheb being a heathen harlot had no right to the grate inheritance which God wanted to give to the children of Israel. That was perhaps one of the reasons why her house was on the city wall and not right inside the city. Surprisingly we find that this despised woman had real living faith in the great God of the Israelites. Other people in the city had also heard about the wonderful works done by God on behelf of His people and they were full of fear. But Rahab could say to the spies ".....for the Lord your God he is God in Heaven above, and in earth beneath" (vs. 11). She even believed that the Lord had already given them the land. She saw by faith how God,s judgment would surely fall on Jericho and its inhabitants, and hence she claimed deliverance for herself and her family. At that time the children of Israel were yet to reach Jordan and the land of Canaan was still occupied by seven great nations. But Rahab could say that the land was already given to them (vs. 9). with that faith she came into the inheritance of the people of God. at the moment she had no idea about her share in that inheritance. She was only in terms of escaping from the coming judgment, but God not only delivered her from her sinful life but also brought her into the holy and chosen generation. That is how she became the great grand-mother of David (Matt. 1:5), and eventually in the same line Lord Jesus Christ was also born. Thus we see how first of all, by faith in the living and true God she was brought into the inheritance.

2. SHARING

Then we find that Rahab was concerned about her own household. She requested the spies to show kindness unto her father's house, and give her a true token that they would save them alive (vs. 11,12). Similarly every believer can claim salvation for his or her family, according to the promise given to us in Acts. 16:31. As we claim by faith salvation for our relatives, we will be given a full share in the great Heavenly inheritance. Many people say that they are born again but when we question them whether they are praying for their friends and unconverted members of their families, they have no answer. If we also are concerned about the salvation of our relations we will have our full share in the inheritance. We must claim God's promise and go on interceding on behalf of our unsaved ones. We may have to wait for a long time before we see our prayers being answered, but without fainting we must continue in prayer and claim deliverance for the whole household.

3. SPRINKLING OF BLOOD

Then Rahab tied the scarlet thread on the window. This means that by faith she came under the sprinkling of the blood. The spies might have told her how in Egypt they were delivered from the angel of death by the sprinkling of blood on the lintels and doorposts. She gathered all her people and by faith tied the scarlet thread as much

as to say that she brought them all under the blood, and thus she and her family were delivered from the coming judgment. She did this straight away without wasting time inspite of the fact that Joshua and the children of Israel were still very far away. Even though she knew that Jericho was a strong city with very thick walls, and that there were many mighty men or valour in the city to fight against the children of Israel still her faith was firm and great, and she believed in the victory of the living God. That is why without any delay she tied the scarlet thread. It is through faith, and simple faith alone that we can claim salvation and thus find ourselves ready to receive the great heavenly inheritance.

4. POWERFUL CAPTAIN

Then came the time for the Israelites to cross the river Jordan and enter into the land of Canaan. They went across the river in the most unusual way. This also shows us something more of the way in which we can enter into and enjoy our inheritance in Christ Jesus. God instructed, "Yet there shall be a space between you and it, (ie. The ark of the covenant of the Lord) about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way here after" (Josh. 3:4). When the priests carring the ark of the covenant were to enter the promised land, first God Himself was going before them to fight on their behalf. It was not by their own strength, power or ability that they could cross the river or conquer the strong enemies who then occupied the land, namely: the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites,

Girgashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites. The ark was to remind them that the living and the mighty God was Himself among them as their powerful Captain. He would lead them and drive out the enemies before them, and they were not to depend on their own strength, ability or weapons of war.

5. FULL SUBJECTION

Now the river 'Jordan is not very wide and deep. It is not more than 25 to 30 feet wide. The children of Israel could have built a bridge over it or could have used boats to cross it. But the Lord had instructed them that the priests carring the ark should go first and all the other people should follow them. As soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the water parted and the people passed across on dry ground. The waters of Jordan speaks of our sinful fleshly nature which hinders us from possessing our inheritance. As long as we depend on our will power and strength to overcome that nature, we will be defeated. It is only when the Lord Jesus Christ takes charge of our lives that we can enjoy victory.

Paul the apostle, was one of the most highly qualified men of his time. He could aslo say that he was blameless as touching the righteousnese which was according to the law. Yet he did not depend on his human qualifications, rather he said that he had no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:1). He also said "... .. not I, but Christ ....." Just as the children of Israel had no scheme or plan of their own to cross the river but were fully obedient to the plan God had given them, similarly we should enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ in our heavenly

King and be under His full subjection. Just as the waters parted as soon as the feet of the priests touched it, we too will find the power of the Lord working on our behalf and leading us to victory. Day after day we have to face many battles in our hearts because the enemy stirs us up with thoughts of hatred, enimity, jealousy, lust, impurity, greed, pride etc. These desires, feelings and thoughts cannot be conquered by our own will power, knowledge or cleverness.

We have to say by faith, "Lord Jesus, I cannot conquer these sinful desires by myself. They are troubling me. You please conquer them on my behalf". Then alone we can enjoy His victory.

6. TRUE FOLLOWING

After crossing the river Jordan the children of Israel had to conquer the highwalled city of Jericho. The Lord told them that if only they would follow Him as He went before them and do whatever He commanded them, they would be able to see the enemy defeated. God informed the Israelites so clearly that they had not passed that way before and that they could not depend upon the wisdom they had acquired in Egypt or any other past experience of theirs. Only the Lord knew the way and He alone could lead them. They simply had to follow Him.

The different cities in the land of Canaan were conquered in different ways. Ai was not conquered in the same way as Jericho was conquered. So the Lord had a different plan each time. He revealed His plans to Joshua step by step and the children of Israel could be

surs of victory when they implicity followed the revealed plan. The reason why the Lord had asked them to keep a space between them and the ark of the covenant (Josh. 3:4), was that they could keep their eyes on it and follow on.

7. SURRENDER

The people were asked to sanctify themselves before they could cross the river (vs. 5). Sanctification means bringing ourselves into the full posession of the living God. Instead of depending upon ourselves, our wealth, our numbers, or any other human advantages, we should give full charge of our lives to the Lord. He will then for us in every situation and make us more than conquerors.

8. FELLOWSHIP

The ark of the covenant had to be borne by the priests and all the rest of the people had to follow them. We too have to identify ourselves with the whole church and thus become successfull in overcoming all the obstacle. We must be in fellowship with other believers and take our full share in building up the Church. Many believers do not meet with other believers fellowship. They think that even by staying back at home and reading some good books or doing somegood works, all such practies will bring a blessing to them. These days you can hear messages on the radio all the day long. Many people are just satisfied with these broadcast. They think that by hearing good music and good messages they can get all God's blessings. But they do not know the value of the

fellowship which we have as we meet together either for worship or for prayer or for the study of His Word. Do not keep away from fellowship, thinking that through messages on the radio or through good books and magazines, you will receive full blessings. That way you will only remain anaemic and powerless. You will lose many benifits of coming together again and again as fellow believers for prayer and fellowship. Our strength and growth depend upon our fellowship with one another. The early believers began to grow spiritually, because they continued steadfasty in the apostle's doctrine, fellowship: breaking of bread and prayers Act. 2:42

9. SUFFICIENCY

The priests who carried the ark remained in the river till all the people had crossed over to the other side. Without a single person being left back all went across. As far as God is concerned He has made sufficient provision for each believer to possess the inheritance. We may hesitate and think that such a great privilege is meant only for people like apostle Paul or other great persons. But in a way God is showing us that those who put their faith in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ can have their share in the inheritance, not by depending upon their own human abilities, but by faith they can surely claim the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ for themselves.

10. LOOKING UP

Paul exhorts us in Col. 3:1,2 to seek those things which are above and to set our affection on heavenly things. This can apply to our heavenly inheritance. When

we were not born again, we were concerned about increasing our income, worldly possessions or property. But as God's children our hearts should be set upon heavenly things. Then in verses 9,10 Paul writes about putting off the old man with its deeds and putting on the new man, which is renewed in the knowledge after the image of God. Crossing the river indicates that the people of Israel had to put off the old life and were entering into an entirely new life. So we say by faith that the Lord Jesus had put away the old man with sinful nature and also claim by faith the newness of life which He manifasted in His rising again from the dead. By that life we can be prepared for receiving the heavenly inheritance.

11. NUTRITION

Just as we need food for physical strength to carry on our daily tasks, we need the life of our Lord Jesus Christ to be able to shoulder our different responsibilities and to overcome various temptations. If we do not eat properly our body will not co-operate with us. Also it is not possible to eat once for all and be strong for a long time. Our bodies are so made that we have to eat two or three times a day. The same is true spiritually also. In order to be strengthened We must take by faith the life of the Lord Jesus. We can tell Him day after day, "Lord Your life is my life. I want that life for this day's duties and activities". In this way we can be strengthened and can overcome our weaknesses. otherwise we are bound to fail and remain weak.

12. CLEANSING

After the Israelites crossed the river Jordan, the Lord instructed Joshua to choose one man from each of the

twelve tribes of Israel and to take out of the midst of the river Jordan twelve stones and these stones were pitched in Gilgal (Josh. 4:20).

Gilgal means "rolled away". The life in Egypt had been a life of reproach. Now in Gilgal their reproach was rolled away. God rolled away and removed all their past failures, defeats, shame and reproach. One of the strong weapons, which the devil uses to keep us defeated, is to keep us reminded constantly of our past failures' He keeps saying to us what about that failure that defeat, that sin? Because of this we become discouraged and say, "How can a person like me ever think of possessing the inheritance in Christ"? In this way many believers come under judgment and condemnation. We need not remain under such guilt of sin: we can claim constantly the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for cleansing the stains of our sins. By faith in his blood we can remain clean and pure. According to Acts 15:9 it is by faith that we can constantly be washed and cleansed from all our defilements. Every time we are defiled by thought, word or deed, we can say, "Lord Jesus I am defiled. Please forgive me, wash me in Your blood and cleanse me". Then He will cleanse us. But if we do not come under His blood, we will remain under judgment and condemnation. Come to Him by faith and He will roll away your reproach. If we humble ourselves and confess our failures and bring ourselves under the precious blood, the Lord will forgive us and wash away all our sins.

13. DEPENDENCE

God commanded Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel. God has made a covenant with Abraham and his seed after him and said, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep..... every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:10). At the same time God had renewed His promise to Abraham that He would surely give him a son and multiply him exceedingly and give him the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Abraham was at that time ninety-nine years old. And Sarah his wife was eighty-nine years old. Humanly speaking they had no hope of their bodies being capable enough to produce a son. God had asked Abraham to circumcise every male child, to impress upon them that they did not get a son through their own strength or energy, but through God's own life, and power of resurrection alone, they had become fruitful. In the same way Joshua and the children of Israel had to keep in mind that they could enjoy their inheritance, not by their own might or cleverness, but through God's Spirit, might and power.

We find the same message being conveyed to Zerubbabel in Zech. 4:6. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts". Zerubbabel was full of doubts and questions as to how the temple at Jerusalem would be rebuilt. He knew that according to the prophecy of Jeremiah the children of Israel would be in captivity in Babylon for 70 years. He saw the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and the gates that had been burnt with fire. People of Israel who were with Zerubbabel were few in number with

little money and little help. Under these circumstances the Word of the Lord came unto Zerubbabel, that God's work would be done not by human might or by human power but by His Spirit. We cannot do any service for the Lord in our own stength and connot possess and enjoy our inheritance by our own efforts. We must learn to depend upon the Spirit of God and must bring ourselves under His full subjection.

By ignoring God's leading and disobeying His commands we will become spiritually blind. Today we find many people have lost their vision concerning the things of God because of disobedience or because of partial obedience.

For example, king Saul obeyed God partially and as a result of it he was rejected by God. David also fell into the tamptation of numbering his grate army and thus took pride in his strength (2 Sam. 24:2,3). He knew fully well that all his victories were won by God and not by his own strength of army. He did not defeat Goliath by his own might or cleverness. He fought against Goliath in the Name of the Lord God and so defeated him (1 Sam. 17:45,50). Yet in his old age he yielded to the temptetion of counting the number of his army. Joab, the commander of his army tried to save him from this mistake but David's determination prevailed. It revealed the fact that David,s eyes were upon the large number of his people and not upon God. That is why God brought him upon his face on a threshing floor. In this way David had to learn to put his trust only on the Lord.

This kind of temptation comes to all of us. We are tempted to depend upon our own will power, ability or knowledge to overcome our temptations or to do God's service. Many people depend upon their cameras, buildings and properties. They think by having all these things they will have more fruit and see good results.

For fruitful ministry, we have to cast ourselves upon the Lord for every situation. Even preachers, if they depend up on their past blessings and achievements, they will cut away the chance of seeing much fruit. Day after day we need to ask God our Lord to touch our lips, tongues and throats and give us His own message for His people. Only then will our ministry be loaded with full life and freshness. Some clever house-wives add salt, pepper. tamarind and other spices to stale and dried up food and fry it to make it look and taste fresh. Some preachers go on using the same old massages in much the same way. That will not give us God's blessing and bring fruit to our efforts. It is imperative that we should go on our knees and ask the Lord to anoint us and give us His massage day by day. We should never depend upon our own cleverness, ability or energy for prepering massages as it will not lead to a triumphant and useful life.

In order to teach all this, God asked Joshua to circumcise the people. He reminded them that they would able to conquer the saven great nations and occupy the land of Canaan only by depending upon the strength of the Lord and not by depending upon their own weapons of war or large size of army or their own cleverness or scheming.

14. BABES

We read in Joshua 5.12 that the Manna ceased. As long as the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God supplied them with Manna daily. After coming to Canaan it ceased. They had to work hard for their food from now on. In order to come to spiritual maturity we must become active partners with God. In the beginning of our spiritual life for a short time God will look after us and watch over us in a special way. But as we progress in spiritual maturity God expects us to exercise faith to a larger extent and call upon Him for help, for accomplishing more difficult spiritual fruit. He wants us to find out His will with greater precision and bear our responsibilities and face trials and difficulties, which are common to all, with a more matured confidence with God's help. This way God wants us to learn to claim His victory by faith.

The apostle Paul, sometimes expounded many mysteries in the Word of God to help his followers in spiritual matters. Then, while he was away, he wrote to them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). so for a short time God will give us shepherds to feed us, teach us and lead us, Afterwards we have to learn to work by ourselves. We must learn to read the Bible with deeper capacity of understanding it and to meditate upon it and be able to hear God's voice through it, Some believers remain as babes for too long a time. They want other God's servants to feed them with milk. They do not grow and become more understanding nor have progressive capacity to digest the strong spiritual meat in God's word (Heb. 5:12-15). May the Lord help us to learn

more and more how to hear His voice and find His perfect will and thus no more to continue to be babes in spiritual growth.

15. INVISIBLE POWER

The children of Israel were now over agenist Jericho. At that time the Captain of the host of the Lord appeared to Joshua. Through this appearance (Josh. 5:13-15), God was assuring him that He Himself would fight on behalf of His people. After that Joshua had to fight many battles but the Captain never again appeared to him nor is He mentioned anymore. Thereafter the Lord was fighting on their behalf in an unseen and invisible way (Josh. 21:43-45). The same Lord has promised to be with us also. Even though He is not visible to our naked eyes but He will be with us and fight our battles, provided we give Him complete charge of our lives, plans and situations.

The Captain asked Joshua to loose the shoes from off his feet. This meant that Joshua had to be free from every defilement. When we walk about in different places we cannot help but get dirty somewhere or somehow. As long as we are in this wicked world, we are always in the danger of getting defiled through the things we see and the things we hear. Some thought, word or deed may usher in defilement. We must claim the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for cleansing and then the Captain of the host of the Lord will be with us all the time. Thus keeping ourselves undefiled through simple faith in the blood, we will be able to enjoy invisible but very real presence of the Lord and appropriate our possessions in Him.

16. BREAK-THROUGH

Jericho had great strong walls and all the gates were rigidly shut for fear of the children of Israel. Inside were mighty men of valour. The very sight of the high strong walls would have frightened anyone. but such was not the case with Israelites. The Lord had promised them that He had already given Jericho into their hands along with all inhabitants (Josh. 6:2). So even before they came in the vicinity of Jericho they were already under the strong confidence that the victory belonged to them. The king of Jericho and his mighty men point to the devil and his angels. We have to fight against evil powers (Eph. 6;12). But our Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated Satan and has put him to shame (Col. 2:15). He won that victory on our behalf. So by faith we too can claim His victory over every attack of the evil one.

God could have destroyed Jericho by using His angels, had He wished so. But He wanted the Israelites to be His co-workers. To become His co-workers, We need to have strong faith. For that reason the Israelites had to believe in the promises of God and they had to obey His commands without any doubt or question. If the Lord desired, the Israelites could have gone round the city of Jericho just once and the walls would have fallen down. But we see they had to go round the city thirteen times. Every time they went round, their faith was strengthened more and more. They were instructed not to pay any attention to any people who might have been watching them from the top of the wall. Perhaps these people were also laughing and mocking at them. On the other hand through the blowing of the trumpets,

the children of Israel were rejoicing in the victory from the Lord.

Their eyes were drawn away from the city and its inhabitants and were fixed only on the Lord. It was only by this strong active faith in the words of the Lord and implicit obedience to His commands that they could enter into the promised land and possess it.

17. PURIFICATION

The children of Israel had to go round the city of Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. That points to the fiery trails which are allowed in the life of a believer to give him strong faith (1 Pet 1:6-7). Gold is purified when it passes through fire seven times. To enable us to have the full portion of our heavenly inheritance God will take us through several painful situations.

18. PARTNERSHIP

Jericho was a cursed city. It was under the wrath of God because of the abominable sins of the inhabitants (Lev 18:6-25). The people of Israel had the honour to work with God and judge the wicked city. As believers we also are called to be co-labourers with God (1 Cor. 3:9; and 2 Cor. 6:1). It is our privilage to judge the world and even angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). When we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour we are brought into a sevenfold partnership with Him. We become :—

1. Partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4).
2. Partakers of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

3. Partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:10).
4. Partakers of His heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1).
5. Partakers of the inheritance of the saints (Col. 1:12).
6. Partakers of His glory (1 Pet. 5 1).
7. Partakers of Christ (Heb. 3:4).

By coming into the full enjoyment of all these experiences we become true co-workers with God and enter into glorious partnership with the Creater of the universe our loving heavenly Father.

19. HINDRANCES

In Joshua chapter seven we read of the defeat of children of Israel before Ai. It happened because of sin in one man's life. We are engaged in the Lord's work as a body. As the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ we are waging a war against the devil. Any failure or shortcoming on the part of even one individual will adversely and harmfully affect the whole Church.

As Joshua and the elders continued in prayer, the sin of Achan was exposed. It was dealt with in the way God had asked them to do; immediately after which the promise of the victory began to be fulfilled. In the light of the above, we should also search our hearts and set things right before God and man so that we may not bring any hindrance to the work of God.

20. GREAT PRICE

Achan had to pay a very great price for his sin. That should remind us of the extremely great price which the

Lord Jesus Christ had to pay to bear the judgment of all the sins of whole mankind. How grateful we ought to be to our beloved Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord promised complete victory over Ai (Josh. 8:1), over the king of Ai, over his people, over his city and his land. They could enjoy that victory as they obeyed the commandments of the Lord in the fullest details. The Lord Jesus Christ has obtained full victory over Satan and his evil power (Col. 2:15). As we obey His commands we too can enjoy His victory day after day. As you study the book of Joshua you will find many simple but immensely important truths revealed, which we can appropriate by faith and thus come into the full enjoyment of His inheritance. May God help us all to have this experience.

When inheritance is passed to a prospective heir, the heir naturally becomes interested in the list of possessions he is going to inherit. Our inheritance from God includes many wonderful blessings. One of the wonderful blessings is the joy of the Lord.

THE JOY OF THE LORD (Neh. 8:10).

In the last part of Neh. 8:10, we read as follows, "The joy of the Lord is your strength". Let us see if we can understand what the joy of the Lord in reality means and whether we can receive this joy of the Lord along with the usual great strength that accompanies it.

When a sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins by being washed in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, he receives a peculiar heavenly joy. This precisely is the joy of the Lord we are talking about.

This joy multiplies when one lives his life for the glory and satisfaction of the Lord Jesus Christ. When once we receive this joy it can be increasingly experienced by us day by day. In the same Scripture portion given above, it is written, "Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared". In other words the heavenly joy which a saved person experiences can be passed on to people who are in sorrow and are deprived of this heavenly joy. This means that the heavenly joy received by one can be shared with other people also, that is, people who are in sorrow and who are without such a joy.

This joy of the Lord also gives victory over every sin and temptation. From the Scripture verse given above we see that this joy is heavenly.

Let us consider the different characteristics of this joy and how this great joy can be received and enjoyed by all people.

1. UNLIMITED JOY

Firstly, it is a very great joy and is given to us in a very great measure. "And the angel said unto them, fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). This message was brought to the world at the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the angels. It was declared with great power and authority; "I bring you good tidings of great joy" The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to give us his great joy. This joy is directly from heaven, and is heavenly.

2. UNRESERVED JOY

Secondly, this joy is also sent from heaven under divine authority to the entire human race. This joy is meant for "all people". It is not meant to be confined to any one section of people. It clearly says, "It shall be to all people. So if anyone thinks that this joy is meant for him exclusively he will himself be deprived of that joy as a result of this mistaken idea. What God syas in the Bible is infallibly true. It connot be altered. The term "all people" means, people of all countries, of all languages, of all ages, of all walks of life, rich and poor educated and uneducated, civilized and uncivilized high and low, white and black. This joy can be received and enjoyed by all.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, there was spiritual darkness prevailing over the world. It was a period of chaos and disorder. Those were the days of bondage for the Jews, because they were under the Roman rule. Idolatry covered the whole country, there was no prophet nor a place of worship from where the Jews, the people of God, could hear the voice of God. It was at such a period that God's message of joy and peace was brought to all the people. The words, "all people" includes you also. so do not make yourself an exception by thinking it does not apply to you.

3. UNDEFEATABLE JOY

Thirdly, this is a joy which can be enjoyed at all times. It is not occasionally or for a short period. Our

life is always subject to changes because of different circumstances such as sickness, sorrow, persecution, pain, poverty, loneliness and bereavement. But this joy can be experienced even in very unhappy situations, because it is the joy of the Lord. It is a joy which will continue and cannot be defeated by any circumstance. See what the Bible says in 1 Thess. 5:16 about this joy, "Rejoice evermore ". You can rejoice all your life time, under any circumstance. God's Word cautions us that we have to go through all kinds of trials and tribulations. Yet in the midst of such adversities this joy will always be present there, because it is the joy of the Lord.

4. WELL SECURED JOY

Fourthly, this joy cannot be snatched away from us by anyone, Friends or enemies, relations or strangers. "Your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22). Enemies may rob us of our earthly joy, but they cannot take away joy which is from heaven. Some people through jealousy and enimity bring false accusations against us and try to take away our earthly joy. But this joy of the Lord "no man taketh from us". Do you possess the joy of such a nature? or has any one succeeded in snatching away your joy? If your joy is truely spiritual and heavenly no one can tamper with it.

5 UNAFFECTED JOY

Fifthly, the joy of the Lord is peculiar joy which can be enjoyed even when one loses all that he has "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off

from the fold, and there shall be no herb in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation: (Hab. 3:17-18). Even though you lose your watch or fountain pen or job or position or property this joy will not leave you. In the year 1935, I myself saw how 58000 people died in 18 seconds in the Quetta earthquake. The few believers who lived there miraculously escaped death although they lost everything they had. At that time I did rescue work there for two weeks The people who survived were crying all the day long. But the delievers even though they had lost every thing, were singing songs and enjoying Bible study meetings. They were least warr ied about what they had lost. Their joy was real, not depending upon wealth, property, position or job. People who do not have this joy, become very miserable of every small loss because their joy depends upon something worldly.

6. UNCHANGING JOY

Sixthly, even sorrow cannot take away this joy. "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). You might wonder how there can be any joy in sorrow. But it is God Who gives such a joy. See for example, on the surface of the sea which was very stormy and disastrous. Jesus could make it perfectly clam and quiet (Matt. 8:26). In the same way God's people enjoy great peace within their hearts even in the midst of greate sorrow and bereavement, or any kind of suffering or trial.

In times of sorrow we must go upon our knees and say, "God connot make a mistake. His love never changes. His word never changes. He is sovereign".

Thus we will see that a true believer never loses his joy even in intense sorrow or grief.

7. UNSPEAKABLE JOY

Seventhly, in 1 Pet. 1:8, the apostle Peter speaks of joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. This joy cannot be expressed suitably by word or song. No earthly language can express this joy. Though we may not speak much, yet in hearts there is a peculiar joy which makes us feel that we are in heaven The God of grace gives us this joy as a gift. It is wonderful and unspeakable and it never leaves us.

8. SUPERNATURAL JOY

Eighthly, this joy does not depend upon earthly factors like eating and drinking. It is a spiritual joy which comes into us through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). For some people their joy depends upon good food. Any day if they have a feast, it will be a great day for them. They long for good food. Their joy is occasional and temporary. But the joy of the Lord can be enjoyed even during drought or famine or hunger. I can say by experience that, though I had to starve for many days, I found no murmuring or discontentment in my heart. I had a peculiar joy within me, with which earthly factors cannot interfere.

Now let us survey our inner life to discover whether we have really received that heavenly joy. We should not deceive ourselves. When any one goes for shopping

usually he thoroughly examines the things he intends to purchase, and inspite of it, many such people are deceived while buying wrist watches and other costly articles. Outwardly they all look nice and attractive, but really they are not so valuable. Those who know about them go on examining them with various tests, and still cannot guarantee a correct selection. In 2 Cor. 11:13 we read how the devil can deceive us. He can make us feel that we have the joy of the Lord even when we actually do not have it. The devil can make an imitation appear as very real.

This reminds us of a certain thief in a railway compartment. Once a man was travelling in a train with a box containing many valuable things. He put his carefully locked trunk on an upper berth, and went to sleep. In the middle of the night he disturbed us in our sleep and examined his box. As he found it to be heavy he concluded that it was not tampered with and resumed his sleep. At the end of the journey he opened the trunk and to his shock found that it was full of stones. The thief had cleverly substituted the stones for his valuable articles to make the trunk heavy.

So the devil deceives us like that thief. It is good and safe to examine ourselves in the light of God's Word, and make sure that the joy we have, is really the joy of the Lord. In order to be sure, we should put the joy to various tests.

1. BEGINS IN HEAVEN

The first test lies in the fact that the joy of the Lord begins in heaven. We can see from Luke 15:10 that this joy begins in heaven and not upon the earth. The

Holy Spirit through God's Words brings strong convictions and real repentance in the heart of a man. When he truly repents of his sins, believes in the Lord Jesus Christ that He died for him on his behalf, there is joy in heaven among all the angels of God. When a sinner repents, immediately God calls all the angels who sing with all the heavenly instruments. The same heavenly joy gets passed on to this repentant and saved sinner also. So it is a joy from heaven. If it were an earthly joy which comes from the preacher, it would soon fade away. One day some people may raise their hands in a meeting and say that they are born again. The next day over a very trifling matter they will get offended and break off. But the joy which comes in to a person from heaven can never fade away.

That is why John the Bapist, as a fore-runner of the Lord Jesus Christ, preached about repentance and said, "Bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance". The Lord Jesus preached saying, Repent : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). Both John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Christ preached of being filled with the Holy Ghost. If people repent of their sins it should be from the heart and not from the lips. To ensure that the repentance is genuine we must make sure that we repent not because of fear, or what people whould think of us, or to keep up a good name. To some people repentance is a very vague consideration They very lightly say "Oh God, If I have done this or If I have done that, please forgive me". They have no real conviction and sorrow for the tragedy of their sins.

In the case of Job, God did not have the need to say to him. "You have done this wrong thing or that" He had a revelation of God. He had the vision of god's

beauty and glory and his mighty power, as he never had before. This made him abhor and hate himself in God's presence because he could recognise the great contrast between the two conditions; one of God's Holiness and other of his own unworthiness. This was very painful for him.

We read in Luke 5:8 that Simon Peter fell down at Jesus feet saying "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man O Lord". Our Lord did not need to expose Simon's sins or rebuke him. But Peter himself was greatly convicted when he saw the greatness and mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again in Luke 19:8 we see how Zacchaeus repented very sincerely. Our Lord never had the need to point out to him that he was corrupt in his duty. The very presence of the Lord brought real repentance and change of heart in him and said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken from any man by false accusation, I will restore him fore fold". So we see how joy comes to us from heaven through real repentance, and it is poured into the heart of any one who repents.

2. LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

The second test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact that our names should be written in the Lamb's book of life.

In Luke 10. we read how the Lord sent out 70 disciples in twos, to preach the gospel and to heal the sick. After they had fulfilled their ministry they returned with great joy. To them, our Lord Jesus said, Do not rejoice in the miracles, for they do not give you real joy".

During His three and a half years of ministry upon the earth our Lord performed many miracles. Some people were so thrilled to see the miracles being performed that they went after the Lord, just to see the miracles. But the same people later on cried, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him". The joy which they sought was only temporary and superficial. A drunkard gets this type of joy when he feels like a king after drinking, but when the intoxication leaves him, he feels ashamed of himself for acting like a lunatic. That is why our Lord exhorted the disciples. "Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). While you are upon the earth make sure that you are accepted in Heaven. In Heaven no one will feel like a stranger. Only upon the earth people begin to make enquiries to become acquainted with one another. In Heaven we will be received gladly and will know every one beforehand, for we are members of one family, the family of God.

3. CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE

The third test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our being conscious of God's presence.

This joy comes to us as a result of continuously feeling God,s presence. The more time we spend in His presence, the more of His Heavenly joy we will receive, by seeing God,s presence always helping and guiding us. By reading the Bible and praying sufficiently the great joy we receive is genuinely Heavenly joy. If we have any sin in us such as jealously or hatred, we lose the sense of God's presence and thereby our joy departs. To regain

this joy we have to once again go through the painful process of truly repenting of our sins and shortcomings. Then alone the joy will be restored. By worshipping the Lord, by reading God's Word, and by close communion with Him through prayer, we can ensure the continuity and growth of this joy.

4. IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE

The fourth test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our being implicitly obedient to God's Word.

We read in Jer. 15:16, that by receiving God's Word and obeying it we get joy. God gave Jeremiah the very hard task, of being a prophet to the people who hated him. They laughed at him, mocked at him and even threw him into a pit. Even then Jeramiah received God's Word and obeyed it, and his joy increasingly continued to be filled up. Thus by obeying God's Word our joy multiplies.

5. SOUL SAVING

The fifth test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our bringing other souls to the joy of salvation.

In 1 Thess. 2:20, Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica as follows. "For ye are our glory and joy." we read in Acts 17, how the people in Thessalonica received the word of the Lord in the midst of persecutions and remained faithful. Paul wrote from Rome saying that he was able to forget all his afflictions because of them. He said that they were his glory and his joy. He hoped that they would stand before God worthy of a

crown. In the same way, when after a very long time we meet people who are saved by our prayers, love, service, and sacrifice, our joy will be very great. We will see many in Heaven who were saved through our life and testimony. That is why we should constantly pray for our friends, relations and loved ones who are not born again.

6. UNSHAKEN

The sixth test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our not being shaken under persecution.

In Acts 5:41 we read that when the apostles were presecuted rather than murmuring, they were rejoicing. They were reproached, beaten, castout, hated, but yet they were rejoicing because they counted themselves worthy to suffer shame for His Name. In the same way when we are put to shame and are reproached for Christ's sake, we find a peculiar joy within us. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and presecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5;11,12). So first of all you should have that joy of the Lord. On a human level if any one rejects or hates or despises you, for many days, you will lose your sleep and appetite. But when you have the joy of the Lord, this joy will not decrease, but will multiply when you have to go through suffering, reproach and shame. The enemy tries his best to discourage us. Hence in 1 Pet. 4:12-14 it says, "Beloved think it not

strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happend unto you: But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's Sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of christ happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified". This joy does not go away when we are treated badly by others or hated or cursed.

7. HOME

The seventh test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our great hope of our Heavenly home.

This joy comes to us through the hope that one day we will be presented by our Lord Jesus faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Upon the earth we are full of shortcomings and failures. But when the Lord Jesus Christ appears in glory at His second coming with all His angels, we will be blameless before Him. At that time, even the angels will not see any blemish in us. We have the hope of seeing Him face to face one day. That is why we should take part in the Lord's Table worthily, so that on that day, we may see Him face to face with joy.

8. BRIDEGROOM

The eighth test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of our meeting the Bridegroom as His bride.

This joy comes to those who are going to be fully identified with Him as His bride. As the bride and the bridegroom share their thoughts and their possessions in perfect love, we also will share every thing with the Lord when we are united with Him. We are chosen as His everlasting partners and companions. Those who do not have such a joy or hope have nothing they can really look forward to and they have nothing to share with others. Some husbands demand good food from their wives. and if they do not get it they become wild. This is all because they do not know what the joy of the Lord is and they are unable to share that joy with their wives. They only demand many things. So many husbands and wives do not have oneness. We can share this great Heavenly joy with others and as we do so, it increases.

9. INTIMACY

The ninth test to ensure that our joy is genuinely from the Lord lies in the fact of God's intimacy with us.

As we go upon our knees and share all our thoughts and desires freely with Him. He will show us what He wants to teach us. What we can do to please Him, and our joy will increase. The Lord shared His thoughts with Abraham as we read in Gen. 18 : 17, 18. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do: Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?,, The Lord says that Abraham is His friend, and that He cannot hide any thing from Him. The mighty and great God is saying this to Abraham, and also sharing His mind

with him about destroying Sadom and Gomorrah because of wickedness of the people. Our Lord must have shared His thoughts with Martha and Mary also in Bethany. Whenever He went from Jerusalem to their house, He must have shared with them how He went into the temple and found corruption all round. That is how we too must share our thoughts with the Lord. We are always asking for something when we pray, but we never wait in prayer to hear what our Lord wants to share with us. Many times in the early hours of the morning, I have felt the Lord calling me to share something with Him asking me to go somewhere. It is a great joy to know what our Lord wants to share with us. It is a greater joy to do what He wants us to do for Him.

We have seen through the Scriptures what the joy of the Lord is and how any one can get that joy. The same joy will become our strength. May our Lord grant us such a joy and multiply it. Amen.

OUR INHERITANCE

BAKHT SINGH